*Tells the Facts and Names the Names*

# CounterPunch

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# How Jim McDougal Died

On March 8, Jim McDougal, Bill and Hillary Clinton's Whitewater real estate partner and a key witness for Whitewater special prosecutor Kenneth Starr, died in a federal prison in Texas. The official autopsy found that the cause of death was heart failure. McDougal died in solitary confinement where he had been placed the day before because, the prison claimed, he had refused to submit to a random urine test for drugs. Authorities at the Federal Medical Center in Ft. Worth said McDougal's death was in no way related to his punishment and that, like all inmates in solitary, he had been monitored every 30 minutes.

McDougal had been taking a number of prescribed medications for a variety of health problems, including a heart ailment, high blood pressure and depression. The medical examiner performing the autopsy, Nizam Peerwani, found a high level of Prozac in his system but concluded it was unrelated to his death. Peerwani said he carefully examined McDougal for signs of foul play - knowing that there would be suggestions that he was killed to prevent him from testifying against President Clinton - but uncovered no such evidence.

Here at CounterPunch we have been given a compelling account indicating that prison officials have some responsibility for McDougal's death. We believe—based on our receipt of several letters from a prisoner who claims convincingly to have spoken to McDougal just hours before his death—that Starr's witness was a victim of what is a leading cause of death and injury in American prisons: medical neglect.

The prisoner, T.J. Lowe, is in solitary confinement. On receipt of his letters we contacted him through an attorney and friend of CounterPunch, Michael Shuman. Lowe confirmed his account of McDougal's death and said that health care services at the prison are so bad that prisoners call it the "Pine Box Medical Center".

McDougal was sentenced to a three-year term of confinement at the Federal Medical Center for conspiracy to defraud the government. T.J. Lowe was being held in the cell next to McDougal's when he was brought to solitary. Lowe's hand-written account has been edited for length and spelling.

"I saw [Jim] the night before he died be placed in the cell next to me. He looked scared. He was asking for his medication. When you go to the hole [solitary] they empty your pockets, nothing comes with you, not even medication. Jim normally carried digitalis. The guards told him he would see a physician's assistant later. He was scared and upset.

"[They had asked him] to give a urine sample to be tested although he never did drugs (he was a heart patient). When he could not provide the urine sample within the two-hour limit they cuffed him and escorted him here to solitary. The staff here knew that because of McDougal's medical condition he couldn't always urinate within a two-hour window [note: a common side effect of taking high levels of Prozac is an inability to urinate.] This happened before, he couldn't urinate within the two-hour limit. Medical staff had told management that if they wanted to test him take a blood sample. It was common knowledge Jim didn't do illegal drugs. He lived right down the stairs from me in the [main] unit. He was a stand up kind of a guy - we liked him.

"Anyway, knowing he couldn't give a urine sample, they cuffed him, took him to solitary, put him in the cell next to me without medication. He had no digitalis. He was stressed out. It is stressful know-

(**"McDougal"**, *continued on page 6)*

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# Our Little Secret

## The Boozy Billionaire

CounterPunch uncorked the champagne after hearing that Alice Walton, a Wal-Mart heiress whose fortune is estimated at $6.3 billion, was convicted by a court in Springdale, Arkansas on charges of drunk driving and refusing to take a sobriety test. She is to be sentenced by Municipal Judge Stanley Ludwig on July 2.

Walton was taken to a hospital with minor injuries after she lost control of her Toyota 4-Runner while driving alone last January 27. When Springdale police officers, who said she reeked of booze, asked her to submit to a blood test at the hospital Walton refused. "You know who I am, don't you?" she asked when they then placed her under arrest. "You know my last name?"

Walton could have paid a small fine but apparently believed - not without reason - that she could simply buy an innocent verdict when the case went to court. She showed up for trial with several of Arkansas's most highly paid attorneys - the press dubbed them the "Dream Team" - and her very own PR spokesman.

But things didn't go as planned. First came the embarrassing revelation that she returned to the hospital to take a blood test five hours after being released by police and got a reading of 0.161 percent, about 60 percent higher than the state's legal limit. Witnesses also testified that Walton, who explained away her belligerent post-arrest posture by saying she was disoriented from the wreck, had a pleasant and thoroughly lucid chat "about the good old days" with emergency room nurse Reba Bailey, a longtime friend.

In 1989, Walton hit and killed a 50-year-old pedestrian, Oleta Hardin, while driving alone. Police ruled that Walton was not at fault and the Wal-Mart heiress settled out of court with Hardin's family, agreeing to make a cash payment of an undisclosed sum. Walton took a blood-alcohol test after the accident. The result is not available since police did not record it on their report.

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## The Gitlin Peril

Is there a day, an hour, a minute when Todd Gitlin isn't handing out quotes? Gitlin, in case by some miracle you've missed his unending appearances in the press, is a professor of culture, journalism and sociology at New York University, and the latest rage among reporters looking for an authoritative quote with which to bulk out their stories.

The man has become a veritable Chernobyl of opinion-mongering. Here at CounterPunch we've rigged up a primitive Gitlin-detector and the thing starts crackling fifty feet from the newsstand. We're not sure when exactly the Gitlin Opinion Reactor came on line as a continuously operating facility. Some Gitlin watchers reckon it was when he moved from the Bay Area to New York. Others reckon it was when he published his assessments of Sixties radical culture, all very comforting to conventional opinion. Gitlin concluded that though a fine spirit of idealism permeated youth in the early stages of that stormy decade, by the end an unpleasing and destructive strain had marred those bright hopes and dreams. You can see why Gitlin had made it to the top as a Walt Lippmann of the sound-bite.

Dr. Spock dies and Gitlin's phone rings. "'Parents turned to Spock because they were inclined to raise their children in a less authoritarian way,' said Todd Gitlin, a New York University professor..." (Portland Press Herald, March 17, 1997.) Verso reissues The Communist Manifesto and Gitlin's phone rings once more. "One thing Marx was right about was how capitalism converts everything into a commodity.' said Todd Gitlin, professor of sociology at New York University."

Here's another example of Gitlin's technique, which achieves the near miracle of being even more trite than the foregoing. We quote from the Christian Science Monitor for September 22, 1997. "Celebrities use the media and the media uses [sic] them," says Todd Gitlin, a media sociologist at New York University. 'Celebrities don't like all the moves of the media. They'd rather have privacy on their terms; but they are definitely not ready to do entirely without enquiring reporters or cameras.'"

Try reading the three sentences aloud. It's the same sort of stuff people say to soothe would-be suicides standing on window ledges. The captive words shamble dully along the beaten path of the obvious, confirming the first law of journalism: never deviate into the unpredictable. People read newspapers to have their prejudices confirmed, not challenged. With Gitlin there's absolutely no danger of getting infected with any dangerous idea.

One problem with the Gitlin Reactor is the "disposal factor." In the old days the waste would simply be carted off to the town dump or even thrown into the river. Environmental laws now prohibit such methods. There have been moves to declare Gitlin a Superfund site. Pending a decision by the EPA, deadly cargoes of spent Gitlins are being trucked west to the Idaho National Engineering labs which has become the nation's prime waste depository for such materials.

## Babbitt's Death Squad

One of the more malign institutions of the federal government is an innocuous sounding outfit most people have never heard of: Wildlife Services. Despite the wholesome name, this off-shoot of the Agriculture Department is not staffed by friends of nature eager to help out mountain goats in distress. No. Wildlife Services is, in fact, a small, well-armed cadre of bounty hunters, serving the interests of the ranching and real estate industries.

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These agents are on call any time a rancher fears that a coyote or mountain lion might have its eyes on his cows or sheep.

Each year Wildlife Services racks up a staggering body count. In an average season, the agency kills more than two million animals using a wide arsenal of weapons, including poison, traps, M-44s (a spring-loaded device that sprays sodium cyanide in the face of coyotes and other unfortunate critters), and aerial gunning. A particularly gruesome killing method is denning, in which fire bombs are dropped inside coyote and mountain lion dens to kills pups and cubs.

Wildlife Services kills a lot of animals, but not very efficiently. In 1992 the agency spent $14,000 to track down and kill a single coyote suspected of lunching on a lamb valued at $65. In the end, Wildlife Services agents did kill a coyote in this operation, but it turned out to be a bum rap. The lamb had been poisoned. This happens a lot. Often the non-target animals killed in a Wildlife Services operation are either rare species, such as lynx and golden eagles or, more often, domestic dogs.

Before Bruce Babbitt became Interior Secretary he denounced the Wildlife Services program at an environmental confab in Salt Lake City, calling it "an ugly form of corporate welfare." But unsurprisingly, the bloody enterprise of Wildlife Services survived and indeed prospered after the advent of Team Clinton. Its budgetary coffers have remained flush and its kill rates high.

Now, a friend of CounterPunch, Patricia Wolf of Santa Fe, tells us she has unearthed evidence that Bruce Babbitt's family ranch north of Flagstaff, Arizona, recently called upon the services of the wildlife death squads. During the week of April 21, Wildlife Services planes circled over the sprawling Babbitt ranch and nearby public lands, gunning down at least sixty-seven coyotes. The agency claims it was acting to protect wild pronghorn antelope fawns, a dubious rationale. But if this truly was the mission, the attack planes would have been more advised to have turned their guns on the cows proliferating on the Babbitt ranch, since the decline in antelope numbers in Arizona is almost solely attributable to overgrazing by domestic livestock.

## Where's Daryl?

It's been awhile since we've heard a word about the man Bill Clinton tapped to head the Air Force, the state senator from Florida, Daryl Jones. We were among the first to expose Jones's somewhat complicated business life (now under scrutiny by the FBI), including his $100,000 payday for a few hours work in a bond deal and his services for the HABDI group in their scheme to open a commercial airport near the Everglades. Jones's nomination has been stalled in the Senate for more than six months now. We called a staffer on the Armed Services Committee to see what was up with Jones. "At this point, he seems more like Davy than Daryl Jones," the staffer chuckled. "His nomination looks deep-sixed."

**In the average season, the US Wildlife Services agency kills more than two million animals.**

## Canosa Lives!

Jones's friends at HABDI, the group of builders (many of them Cuban exiles) looking to turn the Homestead Air Force Base into Miami's second commercial airport, have just won a powerful new financial backer. The family of the recently departed anti-Castro fanatic Jorge Mas Canosa, longtime head of the Cuban America National Foundation, has become a 25 percent owner of HABDI.

## The New Politics

Most politics is business as usual, and that's mostly what we get. But, most definitely not business as usual is a man who was one of our favorite contenders in the recent season, Norm Vroman. He has been running for District Attorney in California's Mendocino county, semi-rural, thinly populated and politically volatile , stretching along the North Coast, some three hours north of San Francisco. In November, he could be the D.A.

Norman Vroman is a registered Libertarian, former cop in southern California, lawyer, deputy DA, deputy public defender, municipal court judge and, for nine months, an inmate of various federal penitentiaries. Vroman didn't file tax returns for a number of years because , as he says, "there's no law that requires you to file a federal income tax return and I believe the government should follow its own rules. It had nothing to with money. It was about principle. If the government requires you to follow the law they must provide a law for you to follow."

In 1991 Vroman was charged with felony tax evasion and five counts of failure to file. The judge instructed the jury that if they determined he had in fact not filed they were bound to find him guilty. Sympathetic to Vroman, the jury acquitted him of the felony and found him guilty of a misdemeanor, for which he was given 17 months, of which he served nine.

From this experience Vroman tells us he learned a number of lessons. The first was on the matter of jury rights. "The jurors came up to me after the trial and said they'd wanted to find me innocent, but felt they had to obey the judge." They didn't of course. As any supporter of the Fully Informed Jury Association well knows, a jury has only to consult the law and their own consciences.

So, Vroman pledges that "when I'm elected DA I'll inform judges I want the fully informed jury instruction given in every criminal case, meaning the jury has option of either following the law as the judge instructs them, or their own conscience, in which case they can set aside the law."

And as he shuttled from one federal pen to another Vroman says he learned something else: "Among people who get arrested there are two distinct groups, and I don't think the District Attorney's office recognizes that distinction. In one group are the criminals who plan their crimes and prey on society. In the other group are the law breakers — the citizens stumbling along in life who somehow run afoul of the law. I will have no mercy on criminals. The law breakers would be approached with the focus of making them aware of what caused them to run afoul of the law and prevent that from happening again."

The third lesson Vroman learned is that at least now the prudent course is to file a federal tax return: "I fought the battle and I lost. I'm not going to stand at the plate and let them hit me again."

He says that for every voter affronted by his tax conviction, there are five who admire his guts in standing up to the feds. Vroman has built up a solid coalition, from the NRA at one end, to the supporters of medical marijuana use at the other. Greens like his promise to go after big corporate polluters and ravishers of nature. ■

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## *A Billion Dollar Gameplan*

# How Big Oil Talks...Live on Tape!

It's the biggest business in America, but almost no one outside the industry and its outnumbered and often corrupt regulators know how it works and how vast are the raids on the public purse. We're speaking, naturally, about the oil business. Specifically, we are speaking about the manner in which the big oil companies can set at below-market rates the price of the crude oil they pump from publicly-owned reserves, allowing the big companies to cheat the public treasury out of nearly a billion dollars in royalties a year.

It was an effort to preserve this chicanery that prompted Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson and Rep. Bob Livingstone to attach a rider to a tornado relief bill that will save their backers in the oil business nearly a bill dollars a year. The two made their move near midnight on May 1 and the veto-proof bill easily sailed through congress, thus preserving one of big oil's most cherished deals.

Hutchinson and Livingstone, both members of a conference committee on appropriations, were forced to spring into action because the Department of Interior's Minerals Management Service, acting under intense public pressure, was on the verge of putting in place new regulations that would have curtailed this loophole, forcing the companies to calculate royalties on the market value of oil as determined by the New York Mercantile Exchange, not oil company accountants.

The gameplan for the oil industry's counterattack was actually laid a year ago during a three-and-a-half hour conference call among oil industry lawyers and executives. CounterPunch has gotten hold of a record of this session made by an oil industry lawyer who was on the call. The memo describes a three-pronged strategy for dealing with the new royalty regulations: delay, subversion and litigation. The executives openly griped about members of Congress and Interior Department staffers who they viewed as threats to the industry and laid out a public relations plan to make the opposition to the regulations appear to be coming from small oil firms and not the big multinationals.

The teleconference occurred on February 20, 1997 and was hosted by the Independent Petroleum Association of America, a DC-based trade association with a budget of $5 million. The IPAA is supposed to represent the smaller oil companies and producers. It is clear from the notes of the session that the conference call was dominated by lawyers and lobbyists for the big companies, including Amoco, Conoco and Chevron. The executives were told that the "CEO Club" of the major oil companies had recently met and decided to make the defeat of the new royalty regulations a major priority. Indeed, the CEOs, acting as if the old oil trusts had never been busted, had instructed their own trade association, the American Petroleum Institute, to begin laying out a plan to counter the Interior Department "by seeking to delay the proposed regulations as long as possible".

Then the Chevron lobbyist took over, saying that he was there to "offer Chevron's financial support to the IPAA to delay and oppose the proposed market value regulations on procedural, not substantive grounds." He said that the first strategy would be "to fund opposition, including litigation, in the name of the IPAA, as representatives of the 'small producers', rather than the giants." This would provide the oil industry with the proper "forum for taking political initiative." The aim was to create the impression of a grassroots movement of small businesses "to lay the groundwork for public support of litigation."

> The Interior Department wrote ARCO that it needn't bother sending a check, since the Administration didn't think the firm had underpaid a dime.

This is an incredibly deceptive maneuver, designed to conceal the fact that the current royalty valuation system primarily benefits the big companies, who can "sell" oil drilled off public lands to their subsidiaries at below market rates and then "post" that price for purposes of royalty evaluation, a feat that is beyond most small producers.

The Chevron man cautioned the conferees that he cannot go as deeply into this scenario as he would like because "he did not feel comfortable" discussing some of the matters in an open session were "attorney-client or other privilege" did not apply. He had a right to be worried, because what was being offered was tantamount to a bribe. In exchange for an infusion of cash from the big companies, the small producers would act as the public face of the anti-regulation campaign.

The executives also voiced concern that congressional opposition to the companies was being secretly orchestrated by Al Gore, an almost ludricous notion given the administration's palavering to the industry over the past six years. The Chevron man said that his people "were checking with their Democratic friends on the Hill to see if the recent statements by Senator Boxer (calling the major oil companies 'deadbeats') and by Rep. Carolyn Maloney had somehow emanated from the White House, the DNC or Vice President Gore's office."

Another topic of concern was a Justice Department probe of past underpayments of royalties by the oil companies under the current regulations. More than 100 letters had recently been sent out to different oil producers informing them that their books were going to be audited. As we reported in CounterPunch more than a year ago, these underpayments may total more than $2 billion. The executives were worried that "a likely source of the DOJ list of such producers was some list Cynthia Quarterman must have". Quarterman is the head of the Interior Department's Mineral Management Service, the agency responsible for collecting royalties from drilling on federal lands.

At this point the Conoco representative interjected that his company's lawyers have been attempting to stave off an investigation by meeting with a Justice Department attorney named Dodge Wells. The Conoco man described Wells as "The Man" to see about working out these problems. If that fails, it was noted, the companies might follow Shell, which had "filed suit in the northern district of Oklahoma to block [DOJ] subpoenas."

Another executive piped up to say that several companies had just retained the services of a lawyer named Marshall Doke to help them deal with a looming lawsuit under the Federal False Claims Act filed by two industry whistleblowers, an independent oil executive, and the Project On Government Oversight, a government watchdog group. The suit is seeking $6 billion in damages from 14 oil companies. Doke, a false claims defense expert with the law firm of Gardere & Wynne, was brought on to the call. He told the executives that the federal government could take over the case (which they did in February of 1998) and warned that "even if they can't make an FCA case stick, there is a False Statements Act that makes any kind of false statement to the government actionable." He noted that there were civil as well as criminal penalties involved. The penalties could be severe: $2,000 to $5,000 for each false report. Some companies, such as Shell, file reports monthly on hundreds of wells.

The session closed with attention to

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more immediate matters, such as killing the new royalty regulations. The lawyer's notes for the teleconference record that "there was talk of using influence on the Appropriations Committee to block the expenditures needed to implement the proposed regulations." This, of course, is exactly the tactic that was deployed on May Day, when Hutchinson and Livingstone invited oil industry lobbyist Jay Saltzman of the American Petroleum to draft the rider for them.

The oil lawyers are beginning to assert their magic, with the help of their allies in the Clinton administration. This month Mobil crafted a settlement with the feds, where it will pay only $45 million to absolve it of any liability. A source at Interior said this allows the oil giant to get off "at less than thirty cents on the dollar".

ARCO, the administration's favorite oil company, got an even sweeter deal. In 1993 it settled royalty claims with the state of Texas for $550,000. At the same time it offered to pony up a significantly greater sum to the Clinton administration. But the Interior Department wrote ARCO (which has given nearly $750,000 to the DNC in the Clinton era) that it needn't bother sending a check, since the Administration didn't think the company had underpaid a dime. This letter has since served to indemnify ARCO against any future legal challenge on the royalty issue. Just another great triumph for big oil. (A useful history of the royalty issue can be found on Bill's Wild Bureaucracy web page, at www.dickshovel.com/rogue.html.) ■


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# *GM, Jesse Jackson and Nightline*
# Paving the Road to Hell...

The struggle of the black car dealers with America's largest company, General Motors, has been a saga that we've been covering here in CounterPunch since last November. We've also made efforts to get the big TV new shows to pick up the story. So we were heartened when we heard that because of CounterPunch's stories, Ted Koppel's Nightline was hard at work. The investigation was being conducted by one of Koppel's reporters, Dave Marash, and producer Artis Waters.

After numerous delays the GM show finally aired on June 2, under the title "Best Intentions". It was a miserable effort. Those who have followed our coverage will know that among the many slimy aspects of the affair has been the shameless shilling on behalf of GM by Jesse Jackson. Dave Marash certainly knew this too, and had, we hear, tried to get the spring-heeled reverend on the show to explain his actions. Jackson declined. In fact, he had nothing to fear. We waited expectantly to hear Marash explore Jackson's complicity with GM. But on our astonished ears fell the following exchange:

Koppel: "Are you convinced the chairman of the board [Jack Smith, who also stiffed Nightline's interview request] is now going to make it change?" (Koppel's "it" refers to the pitifully low number of GM dealerships run by black Americans.)

Marash: "...Jesse Jackson will certainly keep the spotlight on them to see that they make it work. It's a make or break opportunity."

Anyone unfamiliar with the true story (i.e., 99.999 percent of the American people) would have assumed from Marash's thoroughly disingenuous reporting that it was Jackson who forced GM to confront the racism and fraud inflicted on the company's black dealers. As Marash knew full well, GM already knew the full story long before Jackson showed up. Its own consultant, Jack Borman, had delivered a searing report on the subject in 1993. When Borman refused to alter his conclusions, he saw GM executives destroy his career by way of payback. Borman, formerly one of the auto industry's top consultants, says he is now boycotted throughout the car business. Marash knew this story because he had interviewed Borman.

Borman was ruined and Jackson was brought in to paper over the scandal, with the help of his sidekick, attorney Weldon Latham, another man who emerged glowing from Marash's caresses. Latham, be it recalled, is the man GM reportedly paid somewhere between $1.5 and $2 million to help whitewash GM with a bogus investigation. And, it turned out, Latham tried to intimidate black dealers into settling out of court, even going so far as to demand that Charles Bell, the black dealer from Alabama who had won a $26 million lawsuit against GM, fire his attorney, Jay Smyth. Marash's only reference to this unsavory history was the announcement that Latham, described as "an independent investigator" despite being on GM's payroll, would soon be presenting "a report with 250 specific recommendations on how to make it work".

Marash allowed Latham to foist the nonsense that the problem lay in the fissure between the high ideals of GM's top executives and the purblind obstructionisms of a few mid-level managers. Marash discreetly neglected to mention that one of Latham's quick-fix suggestions was for GM to factor its white women dealers into the "minority" column, thereby boosting the "minority" percentage.

In the wake of the show we heard from black dealers feeling furious and betrayed. Many of them had spent hours with Marash and Waters. In fact the only good moments in the whole cowardly show came when the black dealers were able to get a few words in edgewise, people like Ronnie Blye, a well-known former NFL running back with a big reputation on the East Coast, who was compelled to buy a dealership in Denniston, Texas. The day Blye arrived, the biggest employer in town, the Katy Railroad, fired 600 workers.

Astonishingly, Nightline's GM program ignored every opportunity to give its audience a dramatic sense of the story. A notorious episode detailed by Demetrius Patterson, the black reporter at Gannet who first exposed the dealership scandal, had two white GM execs involved in a violent racist assault on a black GM executive who had taken up the cause of a black dealer in financial trouble. We know the names of the people and the location of this episode. So did Marash. Yet we heard this exchange:

Koppel: "Dave, when you start on a story like this, inevitably you're looking for villains. Did you find any?"

Marash: "None that I can name, Ted."

Koppel gave Marash one more chance to give GM the kick it deserved:

Koppel: "If you had to bet on where things are going to be five years from now, ten years from now. Better, worse, same?"

Marash: "I'm a cockeyed optimist, Ted. I'm willing to bet that the next ten years will be better than the last." ■

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("McDougal", *continued from p. 1)*
ing you will go to the hole and be strip searched - all possessions and even what's in your pockets is taken away, even your clothing, everything. They strip you, take your clothes and give you a red jumpsuit, look in your mouth, under your testicles, spread your ass, all that is demeaning and it is stressful.

"So they lock him up next to me, he starts to talk to me on the next vent. He doesn't sound well, tiring out, so I say I will call you later (prison slang, talk on the vent). Next morning he doesn't answer when I call him on the vent. I know he can hear because if you yell into the vent it sounds like you are in the same room almost. I mean, the vent is 8 inches by two feet across and only four feet to the next room. So it seems like he should have heard me but doesn't answer.

"[Later] I notice a bunch of medical people out the window of my cell. We have a window in the steel door 3 inches by 1 foot long. They go in McDougal's cell. McDougal had not responded when they talked to him through the talk hole on the door. They called to him but he wasn't moving. A guard noticed he wasn't moving just before this and called medical staff. Anyway, I am watching out my window. Several medical staff and guards in Jim's cell now with medical carts and stuff for a long time, well over an hour. Finally, they take him out on a stretcher.

"[An inmate] is taken out of his cell. He is told to mop, scrub and paint the cell and does this immediately. This is never done here, never, when [an inmate dies]. It might be swept a couple days later, probably not usually. This time it got scrubbed and painted within the hour. We all said, 'What's up with that?' I spoke to [an orderly] later, I said 'Is he dead?' [He] said he was stone cold dead.

"The urine test cost him his life, I mean the fact that he couldn't urinate in two hours combined with gross medical negligence. He wouldn't have died if he would have had his medication and timely medical care. We [the inmates] laughed when the papers said guards check every 30 minutes - more like every three to four hours [note: our source says that he received newspaper clippings about McDougal's death from his wife]. Hell, you could be dying and yelling for a guard and he wouldn't hear you, it might take hours to get a guard's attention. Some inmates will kick the steel door repeatedly hard for a long time before a cop will come. But what if you are having a heart attack and can't even yell let alone kick a door for 15 minutes? You would never get a guard's attention in time to get medical staff there quickly."

CounterPunch has not joined with the conspiracy crowd that believes Vince Foster committed suicide and Ron Brown was shot before his plane crashed. After McDougal died, a spokesman for the medical examiner's office promised his case would be looked at "a little more closely because of the person involved, but that all prisoners "get the same [health care] treatment." That's precisely the conspiracy that killed McDougal. ■

## "Pinebox" Medicine

The quality of prison health care is a dire scandal, though one scarcely mentioned in the press. Daniel Rose-Burton and two prisoners in Washington state, Paul Wright and Dan Pens, are the editors of an excellent new book called *The Celling of America* which talks about that subject, and the broader issue of the prison-industrial complex ($19.95 from Common Courage, order by calling 1-800-497-3207).

One chapter tells the awful situation in Washington, including the story of Gertrude Barrow, who died of a perforated, chronic gastric ulcer in May of 1994, months shy of her release date on a 31-month sentence for a narcotics charge. Barrow had long complained of severe pain, inability to keep food down, and the vomiting of blood, but was only admitted to the prison infirmary two days prior to her death. While there, a nurse handed her a towel after she'd vomited and told her to "clean it up yourself".

In Texas the situation is equally bad. In a cost-cutting measure approved in 1994, the state switched prisoners to a managed care program in 1994. Given the terrible services offered by managed care providers outside prisons, it's no surprise that prisoners found services cut to the bone. A state audit released in January of this year found that in 16 of 24 deaths at one prison unit, the level of care was "improper". The audit also reviewed medical personnel and found that eight prison doctors and three nurses were under licensing restrictions by state medical boards due to problems such as sexually molesting patients, botched abortions and drug abuse. ■

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